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STATE FOR SA/FO, SA/A, S/CR, SA/PAB, S/CT, EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR BREZINSKI
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD

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SUBJECT: PRT/KUNDUZ: BETTER THAN ITS REPUTATION

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The German-led PRT in Kunduz is one of the most maligned PRTs in Afghanistan, but many of the old myths, especially regarding the PRT's military effectiveness, no longer apply. The Germans now patrol regularly throughout their area of responsibility (Kunduz and Takhar provinces), averaging 130 to 150 patrols per week, and routinely overnight outside the PRT compound in order to access the more remote districts. In the face of a deteriorating security situation over the past few months, the Germans have shown no sign of wavering in their commitment to the mission. The attitude of the PRT toward the U.S. Department of State (DOS) representative has improved significantly since the early days when Germany first took over the operation in Kunduz, and there has been no degradation in treatment even though DOS rep has not had any QIP funds to contribute to PRT projects since early 2006. Meanwhile, the bifurcated command structure of the PRT, as well as the reluctance of the German development agencies to work closely with the military on projects, continue to hamper the PRT's performance. Nonetheless, overall, the PRT is much improved. END SUMMARY.

SNAPSHOT OF PRT KUNDUZ

¶2. (SBU) Originally, PRT Kunduz's area of responsibility (AOR) included all four provinces of the northeast (Kunduz, Takhar, Baghlan and Badakhshan), but since the establishment of fully independent ISAF PRTs in Puli-Khumri (Netherlands) and Feyzabad (Germany) in late 2004 and 2005 respectively, PRT Kunduz's AOR has encompassed just Kunduz and Takhar provinces. The PRT is multinational, with troop contributions from six nations other than Germany (Switzerland, Romania, France, Netherlands, Belgium, and Hungary), but the

total number of non-German troops constitute less than 10 percent of the total force of 450. All the key leadership and staff positions at the PRT are held by Germans and the working language of the PRT is German. (This is in contrast to the German-led PRT in Feyzabad, which is truly a multinational operation, with English as the working language and the Czechs and Danes contributing almost 100 of the 330 troops and filling the deputy commander and J-3 slots, respectively.) There are nine staff in the civilian component of PRT Kunduz: three German diplomats (the most senior of whom is the civilian leader), three German police officers, two officials from the German Federal Intelligence Service, and the U.S. DOS rep. The German civilians serve tours of varying lengths, from two months to two years.

INTENSE SCRUTINY AS ISAF'S FIRST PRT

¶3. (SBU) PRT Kunduz was one of the first PRTs established by the U.S.-led Coalition in late 2002. When NATO took command of ISAF in August 2003 and decided to expand beginning in the north, Kunduz became ISAF's first PRT. This occurred in early January 2004, at the same time that leadership of the PRT was transferred from the U.S. to Germany. For several months, Kunduz was the only ISAF PRT. As a result, the German operation was under incredible scrutiny and comparisons (almost all unfavorable) were inevitably drawn between it and the OEF PRTs. However, while much of the criticism was deserved early on when the PRT was first

KABUL 00003934 002 OF 005

established, it is probably unfair to continue to depict the German PRT in this way.

THE TOP FIVE CRITICISMS

¶4. (SBU) The early criticisms focused on five areas:

-- a poor tooth-to-tail ratio at the PRT, where there are almost three times as many support troops as there are troops who work outside the PRT, and too much spent on building a new PRT compound.

-- the lack of military effectiveness due to risk averseness, including restrictions on overnight and long-range patrolling and burdensome requirements for force protection and medical support.

-- the lack of PRT cohesion due to the bifurcated command structure, in which the military and civilian components operate independently.

-- the almost complete detachment of the PRT from the German development agencies, who live off the PRT compound and deliberately seek to limit their interaction with the military.

-- the reluctance of the PRT command to embrace the U.S. reps as full-fledged members of the PRT team.

YES IT'S BIG, BUT...

¶5. (SBU) The German PRT is several times bigger than the U.S. contingent it replaced and the German tooth-to-tail ratio is not as favorable. However, the Germans do not have an-in-country base like Bagram at which to centralize their combat support and combat service support assets. These assets must be located at the PRTs themselves. Plus, there are many facilities at PRT Kunduz -- most notably the role 2-plus hospital with a staff of 50 -- which serve German troops and other internationals and Afghans throughout the region. During the first

five months of this year, the hospital treated more than 2,200 people (both outpatients and inpatients) and performed some 35 operations. One third of the patients and most of the serious cases (including those involving operations) were Afghans.

¶6. (SBU) It must also be conceded that the Germans have spent a great deal on administrative costs, especially in building a brand-new PRT camp, which opened in May, on a plateau 15 kilometers south of Kunduz. The 460-hectare camp (reportedly as large as the Vatican) has cost 35 million Euros so far (more than three times the original estimate) and is still not finished. But this facility has been built to German standards and the Germans plan to turn it over to the Afghans when the ISAF mission ends. The compound could eventually be used as a university campus, which would make it the first university in the northeast. The new camp has also given a very positive signal to the Afghans about the commitment of the international community, and especially the Germans, to continue the ISAF mission as long as necessary. The camp should also make it easier for the Bundeswehr to get soldiers to volunteer for second, third and fourth tours to Kunduz, which will be absolutely necessary to sustain a commitment over the long term.

KABUL 00003934 003 OF 005

BIG IMPROVEMENT ON MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

¶7. (SBU) When the Germans first arrived in Kunduz, they did have very restrictive rules of engagement. They did not do foot patrols, they did not stay outside the PRT overnight, they avoided patrolling during hours of darkness, they rarely ventured beyond a 40-kilometer radius of the PRT and they reacted to threats and attacks by retreating. However, the Germans have learned and adapted and become much more proactive. The 10th German contingent, which served at Kunduz from March to July of this year, averaged between 130 and 150 patrols a week, which included mounted patrols all night on the major roads. CIMIC (Civil Affairs), Psyops, and J-2 (Intelligence) teams traveled regularly to all 24 districts in the PRT's AOR. The Germans have long had a safe house in Taloqan, the provincial capital of Takhar, but now they are procuring a bigger compound to increase their patrolling capabilities.

¶8. (SBU) The requirement to have a doctor and ambulance within an hour of any deployed unit still stands, but the PRT no longer restricts itself to using just the six-wheel Fuchs Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) as the ambulance, since the Fuchs cannot be used on narrow roads or small bridges. This means there is essentially no limit to where the PRT can go in its AOR.

¶9. (SBU) In the face of a deteriorating security situation over the past few months -- which has included an unprecedented suicide car bomb attack and two ambushes with rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launchers -- the Germans have shown no sign of wavering in their commitment to the mission. The Germans have responded to each attack by immediately returning to the area and engaging with local officials and the population. In the case of the two RPG ambushes, the patrols returned direct fire on the attackers and the PRT participated in joint operations with the local ANA battalion and U.S. Special Force mentors to find and arrest those responsible.

CONTINUED LACK OF PRT COHESION

¶10. (SBU) One area where that has been no change is the PRT's dual command structure. The PRT is still clearly divided into separate military and civilian components, with the PRT commander leading the former and the senior German diplomat leading the latter. They have completely different chains of command, with the commander reporting to ISAF HQ through Regional Command (RC) North, and the civilian leader reporting to Berlin through the German embassy in Kabul. The PRT commander and civilian leader are co-equals in theory, but in practice, the commander is the focus of attention because the PRT is a Bundeswehr facility and he controls almost all of its assets. But even in meetings outside the PRT, where both the commander and civilian leader are represented, Afghan officials tend to gravitate toward the military commander rather than the civilian leader. Most PRT Kunduz commanders have reinforced this tendency by not insisting that the Afghans deal with the civilian leader on an equal basis.

KABUL 00003934 004 OF 005

¶11. (SBU) There is no doubt that this bifurcated command system creates duplication of effort and a lack of cohesion within the PRT. Under the 10th contingent, the civilian leader complained frequently about being marginalized and left out of the loop by the PRT commander. It would be ideal if everyone operated under one chain of command, but it is unlikely that either the Bundeswehr or MFA will ever agree to formally subordinate themselves to the other. The best one can hope for is better information exchange and coordination. There are already mechanisms to facilitate this, but there is clearly room for improvement. The PRT has a common internal e-mail system and there are a thrice-weekly evening PRT staff meetings in which the civilian leader takes part, along with the representative of the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the head of the German police project and the U.S. DOS rep.

¶13. (SBU) In the past, the ISAF POLAD has complained that political situation reports coming from Kunduz through the military clearly have not had the input of the civilian component. Although the civilian leader does not fall under ISAF's command, he should be able to share many of the reports he submits to the embassy and Berlin with ISAF. The civilian leader rarely shares reports he generates with ISAF.

GERMAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES STILL DETACHED

¶14. (SBU) BMZ and the associated German development agencies -- the German Federal Credit Organization for Reconstruction (KfW), the German Development Service (DeD) and the German Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) -- are still located off the PRT in their own compound. While the head of BMZ participates in PRT staff meetings and coordinates closely with the PRT, BMZ still operates independently from the PRT, believing that development is not the military's business. If the security situation were ever to deteriorate to the point that BMZ and its associated agencies no longer felt safe operating in Kunduz, they are more likely to leave altogether than come to live at the PRT.

¶15. (SBU) According to BMZ and MFA officials in Kunduz, Germany has a budget of about 80 million Euros per year for development projects in

Afghanistan. Another estimated 30 million Euros of German government money is funneled indirectly to Afghanistan each year through government-supported NGOs and research institutes (like the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung). BMZ controls about 50 million Euros of the Afghanistan development budget. While the other 30 million Euros is nominally controlled by the MFA, much of it is reportedly earmarked for certain programs like the Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) (1 million Euros) and the German police project (12 million Euros). In addition, the MFA development rep at the PRT has about 60,000 Euros per year that he or she can spend on small, quick-impact projects without prior approval from Berlin. Finally, the PRT commander has access to a small amount of money (15,000 to 30,000 Euros) that he can use to address immediate needs.

¶16. (SBU) Meanwhile, the PRT CIMIC (Civil Affairs) teams continue to travel throughout the AOR, meeting

KABUL 00003934 005 OF 005

local authorities and doing comprehensive assessments of each district. However, CIMIC has only a bare-bones budget and cannot fund even a small percentage of all the worthwhile project proposals it develops. BMZ does not see the CIMIC projects as fitting within its overall development plans, and therefore funds only about five percent of the proposals it receives from CIMIC. The MFA development rep and the PRT commander fund some of the CIMIC proposals, but their own budgets are rather limited. In the past, CIMIC counted on the DOS rep to help fund some of its projects with USAID QIP funds, but those funds have not been available since early 2006. That has sent CIMIC scurrying to other NGOs to try to make up the difference.

MUCH IMPROVED ATTITUDE TOWARD U.S. REP

¶17. (SBU) The attitude of the PRT toward the U.S. DOS rep has improved significantly since the early days when Germany first took over the operation in Kunduz. During the 10th contingent, the DOS rep was about as integrated into the PRT as he could be without compromising his ability for independent action. He was included on the PRT Kunduz internal e-mail system and he had a seat at the table for the thrice-weekly PRT evening staff meetings. While the commander did not seek out the DOS rep's political advice on issues, he was always open to input.

¶18. (SBU) After insisting for years on an MOU to define the U.S. role at the PRT and seeking reimbursement for the U.S. share of PRT costs, Germany has apparently decided to drop these demands. DOS rep was never approached on these issues during the 10th contingent. At the new PRT compound, he was provided private living accommodations and separate office space sufficient for both himself and the political assistant. The Germans have sought no payment or reimbursement.

¶19. (SBU) Because of the generally permissive security environment in the northeast, the civilians at the PRT usually move on their own in armored vehicles without military force protection. Therefore, the DOS rep did not require much active support from the PRT to carry out his duties. Had military force protection been routinely required, it is not clear that the PRT would have had the assets, or been willing, to provide the necessary support.

COMMENT

¶20. (SBU) While the German-led PRT in Kunduz is far from perfect, it is significantly better than it was at the start and is constantly improving, especially in terms of its approach to military operations and its engagement with the local populace. Fortunately, we have moved beyond the issues that previously caused irritation in the U.S.-German relationship at the PRT and have forged a strong partnership.

NEUMANN